



Historic Churchyards Project



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Acknowledgements:

Other sources:
 Coleman and Torrie. *Historic Coupar Angus (the Scottish Burgh Surveys) 1997.*
 Easson. *Charters of the Abbey of Coupar Angus 1947.*
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 Mitchell. *Monumental Inscriptions (pre-1855) in North Perthshire.*
 Willsher, B. *Stones and Understanding Scottish Graveyards.*

www.pkht.org.uk

Further information
 Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust:
Historic Churchyards in East Perthshire
Defending the Dead:
The Legacy of the Body Snatchers
 Collace, Meikle and Aylth *Historic Churchyard Historic Churchyards*



Painting by Lord Balmerino 1607 © Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk

the gatehouse

The gatehouse is the only remaining part of the Abbey and is a Scheduled Monument. It sits in a separate rectangular area and is owned by Moray Estates. The condition of the arch has been surveyed and it has been found un-safe and in need of urgent repairs which are currently under consideration by Historic Scotland. The drawing from the 18th century suggests that this was the only remaining part of the Abbey still standing. The old plan of the Abbey shows that there were fortified towers at each corner of the walled Abbey Precinct. However, Pont's Map and Lord Balmerino's painting indicate a tower.



Coupar Abbey, Angus 1783 (the Hutton Collection) under license to the National Library of Scotland.

Shortly before the Reformation the Abbey gradually fell into decline. The condition of the Abbey and its buildings deteriorated rapidly (there are uncorroborated accounts of destruction by a mob from Perth) and it became derelict. The Abbey was stripped of its finery, ornament and the "idolatry" which so offended the Reformers. A lasting achievement of the Abbey was its highly organised agricultural development and improvement of the land by drainage. A new church was constructed from the Abbey's stones in 1647, which was later modified in 1780. This second church was replaced by the present church in 1859 designed by local architect John Carver and is a Category B Listed Building.

THE CHURCH

Timothy Pont Map c. 1580 (under license to the National Library of Scotland).



large foundations in Perthshire, the other two being Innerchattray (an Augustinian Abbey) and Elcho (a Cistercian Nunnery). After the Reformation in 1560 (when the church split from Rome and became Protestant), the Abbey and its surrounding buildings fell into disrepair and its carved masonry can be identified, re-used in buildings around the town and the wider area, such as Arthurstone.

the watch house

The roughly octagonal building was erected by public subscription in 1822. However, it re-uses medieval fragments of masonry. In particular the frieze at the top of the wall appears to be sections of the Abbey's massive fluted columns. Inside, there is a fireplace to warm the men who kept watch through the night for body snatchers, who posed a threat particularly in the first three decades of the 19th century.



Watch House

the murray of simprim mausoleum

This was built in 1850 as the family burial tomb for William Murray of Simprim, a wealthy landowner. Although built as a mausoleum, the building is anecdotally described as a Mortuary and the interior is fitted out with a sink and a natural stone anatomy slab.



Simprim Mausoleum

THE MEDIEVAL ABBEY

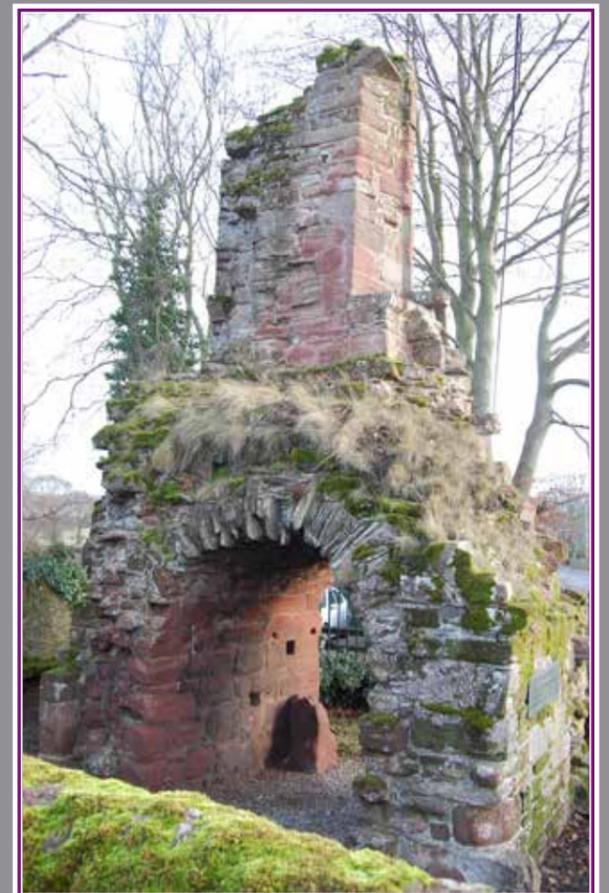
The Abbey Seal (courtesy of the National Museum of Scotland)
 Coupar Abbey, Angus 1783 (the Hutton Collection) © Perth Museum and Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross.
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The Coupar Angus Abbey Churchyard sits on a slight prominence in an otherwise low-lying area South of the River Isla and within a loop of its tributary, the Coupar Burn. The name Coupar is possibly derived from the Gaelic Cui-Bharr, or rear-of-the-ridge, which describes the situation of the town. The local area has a rich layering of history with cup-marked stones, a Bronze Age cairn site, stone circles, Iron Age forts, and Pictish stones and burials. On the churchyard site itself however, there is no evidence prior to the medieval Abbey. Although the Cistercian Order which founded the Abbey had a tradition of occupying unbroken ground, an 18th century plan of the Abbey shows "Agricola's walls", suggesting a connection with, or even re-use of Roman fabric. The Roman camp lay in approximately the same position as the Abbey and it is possible that it occupied the same site. A "Celtic head", with curly hair and elliptical eyes with pupils, was found in a garden in Abbey Road. It is now in storage at the Perth Museum and Art Gallery.

HISTORY OF COUPAR ANGUS

COUPAR ANGUS ABBEY CHURCH HISTORIC CHURCHYARD



Coupar Angus Abbey Church



Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust

Archaeology | Architecture | Conservation



key to gravestones

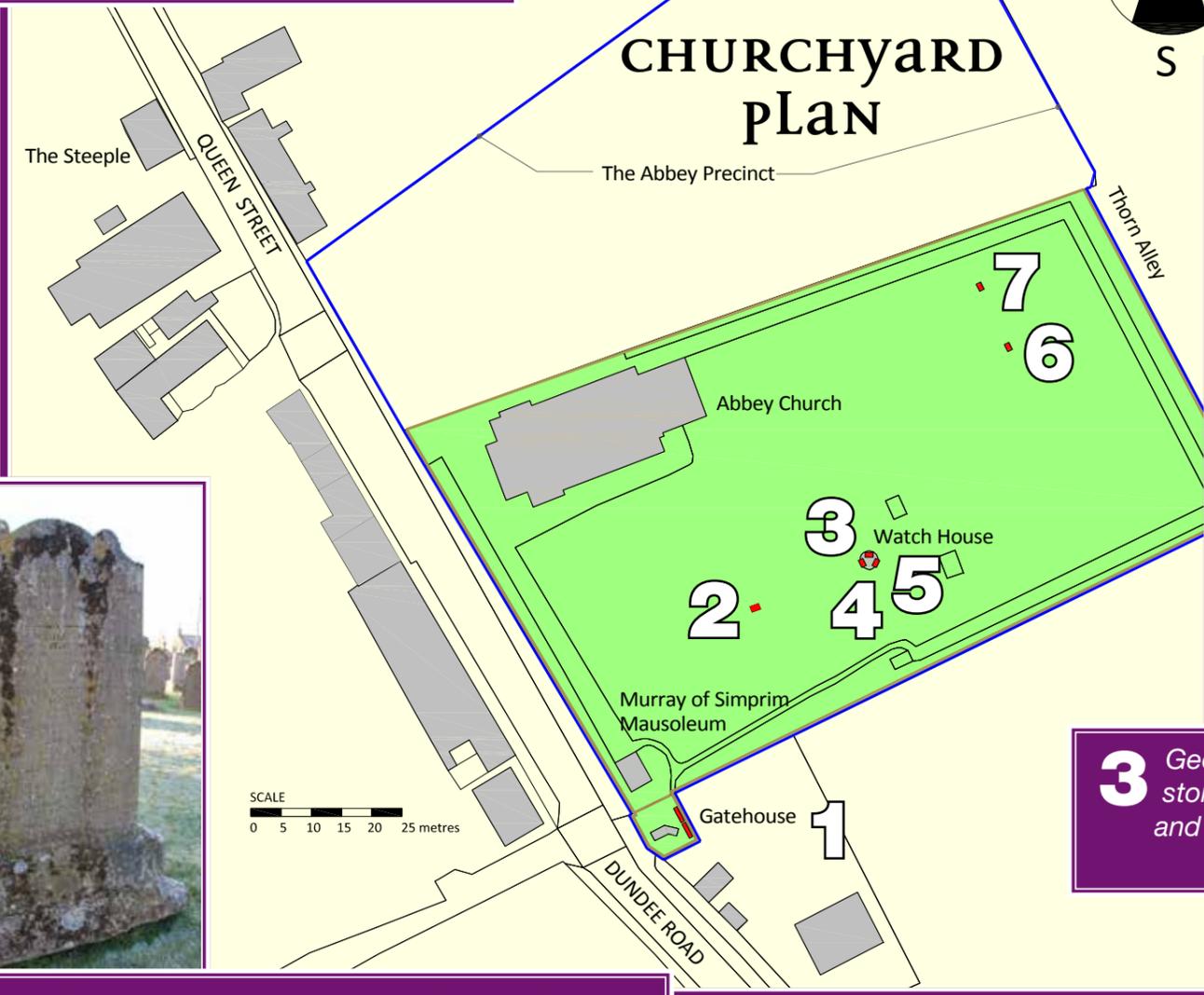


The gravestones and the grass are generally in good condition. There are few older stones from before the 19th century and Jervise noted in 1875 that many older stones had been moved away. However, those monks' stone coffins, which were originally found at the East end of the church and now lie beside the gatehouse and older stones around the watch house, are amongst a small number which have survived.



1 Two coffin stones, tapered and sized – believed to have been the tombs of Cistercian monks. ship on south face.

4 Ogilvy (1731), a Resurrection scene featuring trumpeting angels.



2 Thomas Bell (1815), comedian of the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh. Headstone erected by the Dundee Eccentric X Society, in testimony of their esteem and respect for Mr. Bell, an honorary member. "The curtain dropped on the drama of his existence and he retired of the world to the sorrow and regret of those who had the pleasure of his acquaintance".



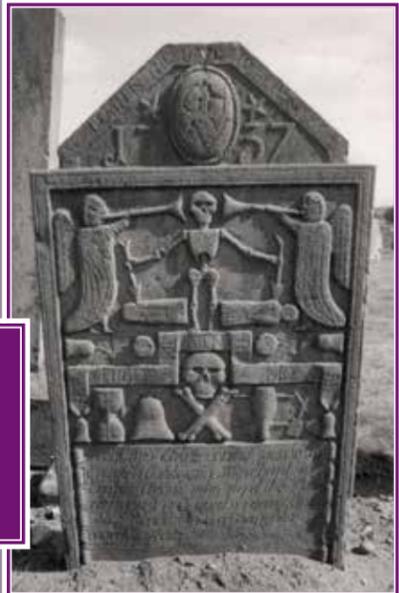
3 George Wighton (1703), a table stone featuring angels and souls and with block lettering "Here lies an honest man".

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7 Thomas Small (1773). A Minister Associate of Coupar Angus who died at the age of 28. West face-torches symbolise the life eternal (lit) and mortality (extinguished) and palm frond in the centre. This stone is now badly decayed.

6 Ann Young (1731), merchant symbol on West face and a Resurrection scene on East face, complete trumpeting angels with feathered wings.



5 Ann Miller (1760), deep carving with two figures. Erected by her husband Charles May "Writer in Angus".

